

Indeed, given the number of ways that words can be misspelt our findings clearly underestimate the magnitude of the problem. The topics that we chose for our misspelt searches are common to clinical practice and have been used within systematic literature reviews for various medical specialties, thereby making our findings relevant to such uses of Medline.

Researchers need to beware of misspelt textwords within Medline and to realise the importance of using both MeSH headings and textwords in any systematic literature search.<sup>1-4</sup>

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## Introducing Selfcite 2.0—career enhancing software

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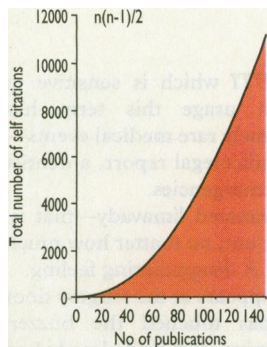


Fig 1—Total potential number of self citations as a function of the number of publications

Citation rate is becoming increasingly important as an index of success within medical academia.<sup>1</sup> Self citation (referencing one's own earlier publications in a new publication) is a useful method for increasing citation rate.<sup>2</sup> Although some academics are undoubtedly masters of this approach, maximising the benefit from self citation can be tedious, so we have developed a user friendly software package, Selfcite, to help in this task. In this paper we introduce the theory of self citation and give a short description of the Selfcite program.

### The benefits of self citation: theoretical considerations

To achieve maximum benefit from self citation, each new publication should cite all earlier works.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in one's second paper, the first is cited. In one's third, the first and second are cited, making a total of three citations. In the fourth, the first, second, and third are cited, making a total of six citations. The mathematically inclined reader will immediately recognise that the number of possible citations is the sum of a series of triangular numbers, and that the total number of citations possible on publication of the *n*th paper is given by  $n(n-1)/2$ .<sup>4</sup> Thus, the tenth paper produces 45 references and the 100th produces 4950. The expected accumulated reward is shown graphically in fig 1.

Clearly this is the ideal situation and it will rarely be possible to realise this goal: despite a commitment to the principle of self citation, the content of manuscripts may prevent later citation. In this regard it is worth remembering that early publications should be kept very general with a view to later citation in progressively more specialised works.<sup>5</sup>

Recognising the burden on time and ingenuity of incorporating citations of one's earlier work into new manuscripts we were motivated to develop Selfcite.

### The Selfcite 2.0 package

Selfcite 2.0 is an integrated suite of programs that runs on IBM compatible personal computers under Windows and is compatible with the major word processing packages, reference managers, and online reference databases. A database within Selfcite stores details (including title, key words, and abstract) of each of the user's publications. The program can be used in interactive mode or non-interactive mode. In interactive mode the user composes the text of a new manuscript and Selfcite makes context sensitive suggestions for citations of one's own work. The user can then select or reject suggestions. In the non-interactive mode Selfcite can be used to scan the final text of a manuscript and automatically insert self citations. The algorithm used

to decide on inclusion of a citation involves assigning a score to each of the user's previous publications based on the similarity between words and phrases in the nascent manuscript and those used in the database record for previous publications. The user sets a threshold score that determines whether or not a citation will be inserted automatically in scan mode.

The package has several important features:

- **Maxcite**—this option maximises the number of self citations and can usually incorporate over 80% of the user's earlier work.
- **Megacite**—this option ensures inclusion of all one's previous papers and if necessary inserts them randomly into the text. We recommend that this option should be used only sparingly as reviewers and editors may notice that references do not have a crucial bearing on the text.
- **Minicite**—This option allows the user to choose the desired number of self citations for a given manuscript and the program selects those most appropriate.
- **Modesty**—This overrides the program and prevents self citations (not recommended for general use).
- **Multicite**—This allows multiple users to maximise the number of joint self citations. This is particularly useful for research groups.
- **Shaft**—A popular option introduced in version 2.0. It allows the user to specify one or more other researchers who should not be cited. A warning message flashes on the screen if one of the researchers in the shaft list is coauthor of a paper that the user is inadvertently trying to cite. The closest self citation is suggested as an alternative.
- **Paracite**—An extremely useful feature. The program deliberately miscites one's own earlier publication in the hope that another worker will write a letter to the journal pointing this out, thus allowing the user to publish a letter in reply, thereby providing further self citation opportunities. (The default setting is paracite on but only once per manuscript.)
- **Citers-block**—The user decides on the references to be cited and the program offers suggestions for plausible passages of text to support their citation.
- **Stats**—This set of options provides statistics about the overall efficiency of the self citation process (total number of self citations divided by total number possible) and will present the data in graphical form. The algorithms monitor potential self citation classics and automatically increase their citation priority in the main part of the program.

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## Conclusion

We believe that self citation is currently handled inefficiently by most (but by no means all) researchers and that its correct use is beneficial to an academic's career. We have developed a user friendly package of programs that minimises the arduousness and maximises the benefit of the self citation process. We are confident that it will prove useful to researchers as well as to clinicians in training.

The current manuscript has been prepared using Selfcite 2.0 with multicite = on, minicite = 5, and shaft = global. Programs are available from the authors at: <http://www.onan.Selfcite>.

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## The unbearable inadequacy of language

Liam Farrell

James Thurber once lamented the existence of those things, actions, expressions, situations, etc, which exist but have not yet been named—for example, to try and avoid someone in the street by stepping to one side. Your adversary mirrors your movements and together you shuffle from side to side in a bizarre little dance, both desperately trying to get past the other. Eventually you extricate yourselves with an embarrassed smile and go on your way. Recognise the situation? There's no word for it.

Medicine is particularly affected by this insufficiency of nomenclature, so we at the *BMJ* have decided to take urgent corrective action, and today we make a few suggestions of how these lost meanings could be usefully married to Irish place names, which otherwise do nothing but loaf around on signposts scratching themselves.

Moy (noun): a small papilloma which the owner regularly plays with. "Worried by the news of his mother in law's hernia, Maguire absently played with his moy."

Limavady (n): the irresistible desire to incise an abscess. "The cyst was swollen and pointing and he felt a limavady coming on."

Leitrim (n): an *E. Coli UTI* which is sensitive to trimethoprim. By common usage this term has expanded to refer to all extremely rare medical events—for example, an objective medicolegal report, a dentist who is actually available for emergencies.

Nenagh (n): an unconsummated limavady—that is, when no pus comes shooting out, no matter how much you hack and hack and hack. A disappointing feeling.

Belfast (n): a patient who appears at the surgery door even before your finger has touched the buzzer. "Only 11 00 on Monday morning, and he'd already had three belfasts."

Lislea (verb): the skill by which complimentary biros disappear so quickly. One theory is that they slip through a worm hole in space and end up on the planet Bartowel, where they have developed a sophisticated civilisation, and may soon invade earth. Consequently, the theory runs, all biros should be treated with kindness (remember the whales in *Star Trek IV*?).

Killough (v): to cough vigorously outside the surgery door, to let the doctor know you are waiting, that you are impatient, and that you are really sick. Often employed by a belfast (qv). Killoughing may be associated with a self diagnosis of ME.

Comber (v): to copy all the references from a review article and pretend you've actually looked them up yourself.

Burren (n): some other poor bugger's work.

Ennis (v): (patient) to remove one's sock with a snapping motion, thereby expelling a shower of stale sweat and flakes of dead skin into the doctors' face. "Beware of the ennis," Professor Gregorovich told his awed students, 'And always have a towel handy.' Anton Chekhov, *Uncle Vanya*

Derry (v): to present a burren (qv) with deceitful sincerity. Professors and heads of department are good at this. "At the meeting in Monte Carlo burren after burren was derried by a panel of distinguished speakers."

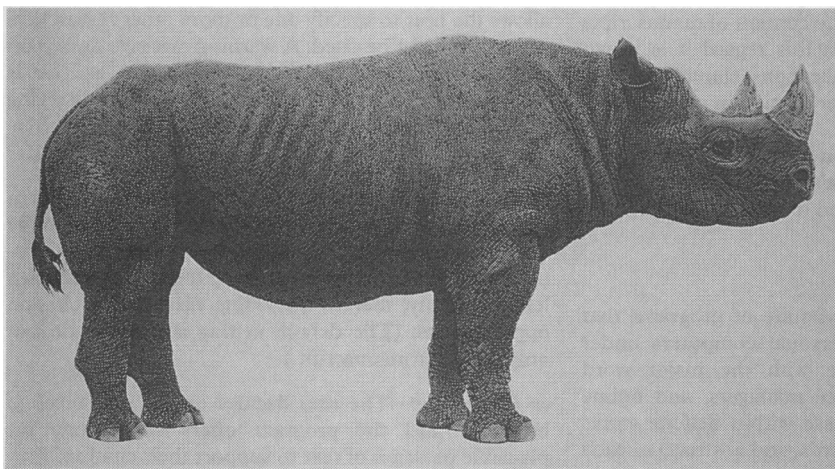
Cullybackey (n): a scientific paper in which there are more authors than subjects. *The New England Journal* specialises in these. "This week five interesting cullybackies throw a new light on gerbils as disease vectors." *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Cooley (v): to add one's name to a research paper, despite having done none of the work. Part of the process which facilitates a derry (qv) and results ultimately in a cullybacky (qv). To cooley has recently become rather disreputable but what the hell, who's going to know.

Hoddity (n): trite indulgent poetry in a medical journal, particularly the *Lancet*. "A hoddity is like a dog shaking hands; it is not done well, but one is surprised to see it done at all." Dr Samuel Johnson.

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"Jos the Rhino" by Jonathan Delafield-Cook

"One day last summer we had a message that in the Royal College of Art's diploma show there was a life size charcoal drawing of a rhinoceros called 'Rosie' whose purchaser was for some months unable to house it and would we like to borrow it. I went to look and said, 'Yes, please.' She was such a success that when she was reclaimed we commissioned her mate, Jos, and Johnny Delafield-Cook kindly obliged. He is such a fine and noble creature (and so is Johnny) and probably the most popular piece in our collection."—JAMES SCOTT (see article p 1634)